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New Flap at New Republic

By Jean M. White

Stanley Karnow, foreign editor of The New Republic for the last two years, resigned yesterday in a squabble over the magazine's coverage of the Mayaguez incident.

If the Mayaguez seizure provided the flashpoint to ignite Karnow's resignation yesterday morning, the dispute came after persistent reports of tensions among the magazine's staff since Martin Peretz purchased the liberal weekly over a year ago.

Karnow becomes the second of a six-man inner circle of top editors to resign in the last few months. Doris Grumbach, the literary editor, is leaving the end of June.

Both Peretz and Karnow agree that the flap that erupted yesterday in Peretz's third-floor office turned on whether The New Republic should run a signed article of lead editorial on the Mayaguez affair in this week's edition (available today).

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But from there on, it gets more complicated, with the surfacing of underlying disagreements over editorial style, principle and policy.

All that we have had on the important Mayaguez question has been a two-paragraph note 'Karnow wrote it) rushed into print the day after the seizure," Karnow said yesterday. "I felt we should have a piece this week. I had some hard questions to raise. I told Marty that I didn't think we could ignore it."

With no word on Wednesday and the magazine deadline yesterday, Karnow said he again raised the question yesterday morning and was told that he perhaps could write a piece next week.

As for Peretz, he countered that he considered it a "rather off principle" to resign because an article can't run in a certain week's edition.

"I resent a little bit anyone trying to make this a matter of principle," The New Republic owner said. "Karnow and I have differed before, mostly over business matters . . . I know he's been looking for a job."

Karnow, a veteran foreign correspondent who wrote on Asian affairs for The Washington Post for seven years. insisted that principle was involved and that a lot of problems came to a head at this time.

"We're not just talking about a technical matter'" he emphasized. "My basic position is that we should have a piece of the Mayaguez this week. This is not daily journalism but it is journalism."

David Sanford the magazine's managing editor, who feels The New Republic is "a better magazine than it used to be," stressed the magazine doesn't overlook important new events and will have a piece on Mayaguez "if not next week, then soon after."